



# TERRY MOORE'S HOW TO DRAW EXPRESSIONS





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STRANGERSINPARADISE.COM/STORE**

**EMAIL  
SIPNET@STRANGERSINPARADISE.COM**

**TERRY'S BLOG  
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**PUBLISHER  
ROBYN MOORE**

**ABSTRACT STUDIO  
Box 271487  
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Psychologist Paul Ekman has devoted much of his noteworthy career studying facial expressions as linked to emotions. It was Eckman who proved that, contrary to popular belief, emotional facial expressions are not culturally determined, but universal among all peoples. In other words, take an urbanite to the most isolated tribesman on earth and they will recognize each other's emotions as expressed on their faces. Eckman quantified and classified unique facial expressions using his Facial Action Coding System. Interestingly, Eckman's work led him to become an authority on the detection of lying through observation of microexpressions and body language. Blade Runner movie fans saw something similar take place in the eyeball machine used to detect lying replicants.

So, yes... there is a science to studying expressions and, no... artists don't have to learn it.

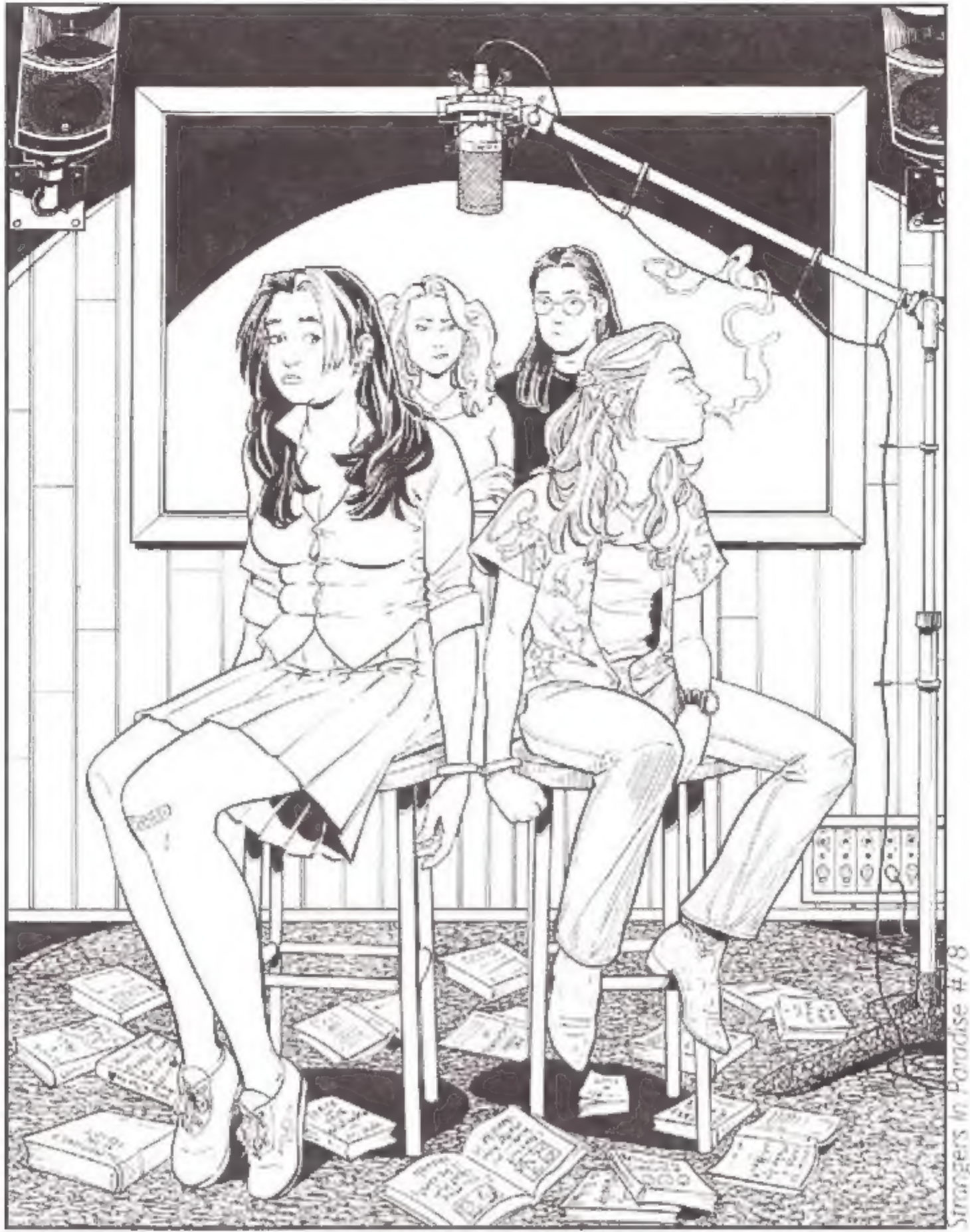
You'd be hard-pressed to find an artist who's heard of Paul Eckman or his system. All that matters is for you, the artist, to understand that your art can communicate across social, cultural and language barriers. People who are nowhere near you and nothing like you will understand what your drawing is telling them through the expressions you draw on your characters. That, my friend, is a power beyond the reach of fame, money and even literature. That is why art and artists are important in a political world. The expressions in your art will speak to the world. What you say is up to you, but this book will help you with your vocabulary.

*TERRY OOKER*









Before I drew my first comic book, I spent 13 years of my life locked in a dark room studying human beings on a big screen. My job title was video editor. While the world turned on a 9 to 5 schedule, I worked long, odd hours—day after day, week after week, year after year—until the act of studying life in high speed and slow motion became second nature. From hours of footage, I picked out the seconds that mattered most and put them together to form a powerful, condensed message. I understood the principal well, because I grew up reading comic strips that did the same thing.

Studying hours of raw footage every day for years is not like watching a lot of movies. I was required to analyze someone repeating the same thing many times, replaying the footage over and over until I decided which delivery contained the right nuance, the best expressions with all the subliminal messages possible to convince the viewer to trust and believe what was being said. Sometimes, if the footage was particularly good, I went back and studied the performances again, after the client was gone.

Studying people for all those years at 30 frames per second taught me two things I've carried with me throughout my art career: the face is constantly changing and expressions tell you what words can't. In fact, they often tell a separate, silent story.

To this day, when people ask me what *Strangers In Paradise* is about, I fumble for an explanation. It's... complicated. Does the picture above give you any ideas what was going on? An entire graphic novel in four expressions and, for the artist, it's just dots and lines.



# dots & lines



## The Complete Paradise T00



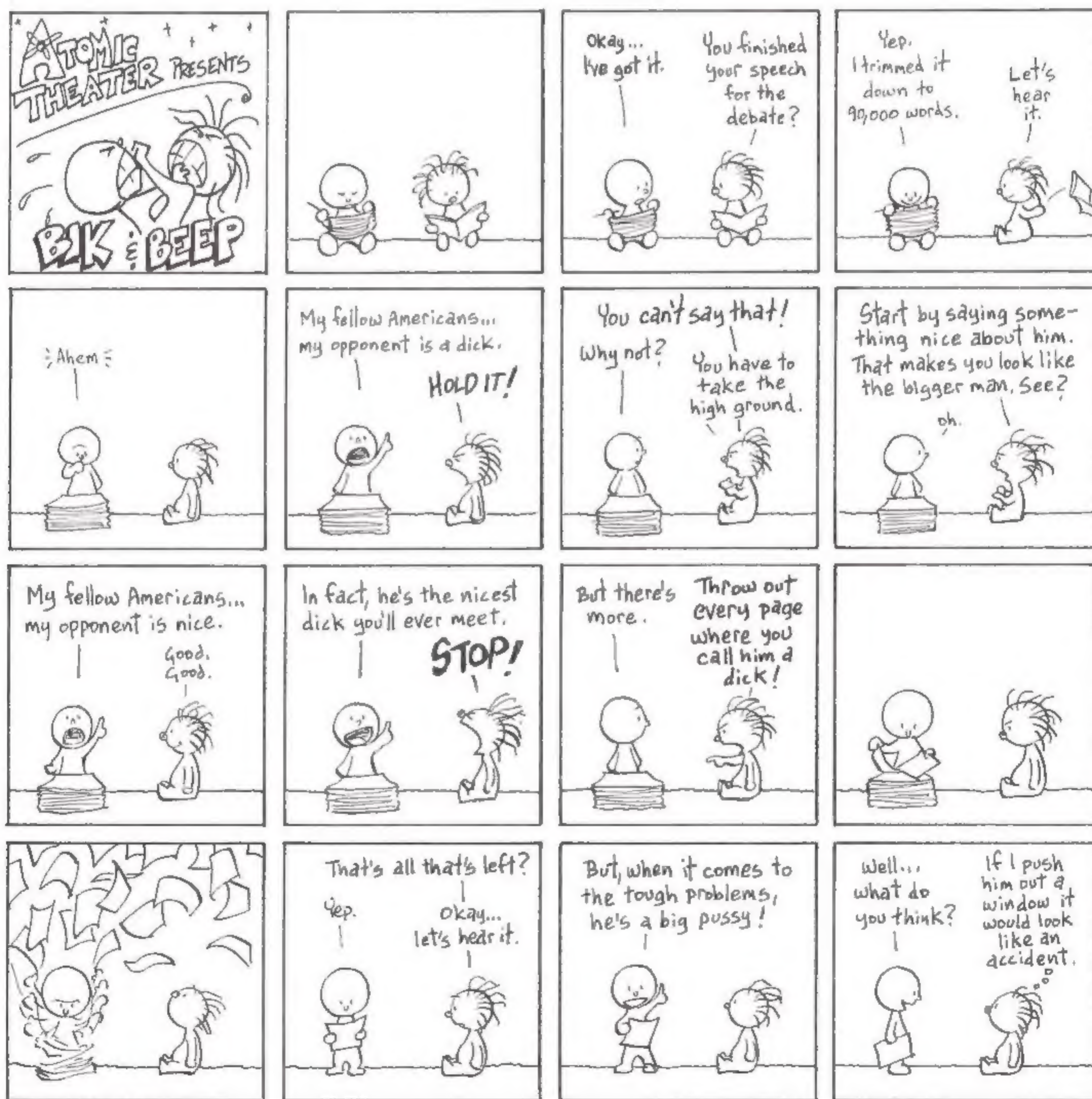
TERRY 1-9



In passing conversations, when people ask me how I learned to draw expressions, I don't dive into a long-winded story about my years as a video editor; I say I learned by cartooning. And it's true, editing was like a master class on basics I'd already learned as a kid from Chuck Jones cartoons. For me, Chuck Jones was a master of expressions, so my comic art priorities have always been: 1. Expression, 2. Body Language, 3. Technique. Working in the opposite order makes for problematic drawings. Sometimes I won't even rough in the body until I've achieved the key lines I need for the proper head and face because, without those, I know I'll have to redraw the whole thing anyway.

Most drawings begin with a few lines, maybe a dot or two, and sometimes this is all you need to get your point across; the rest is details. Stop at dots and lines and you have a cartoon. Embellish like crazy and you have something between a masterpiece and a mess. The same goes for capturing expressions. You can do it in a few lines or draw until the page is black. Your choice.

I could have drawn the conversation below at the top of my ability, with highly rendered figures in light and shade, but it wasn't necessary. Dots and lines were all it took to convey the intense emotional exchange between this lovely couple.





Okay, rewind. Let's go back and watch this again in slo-mo.

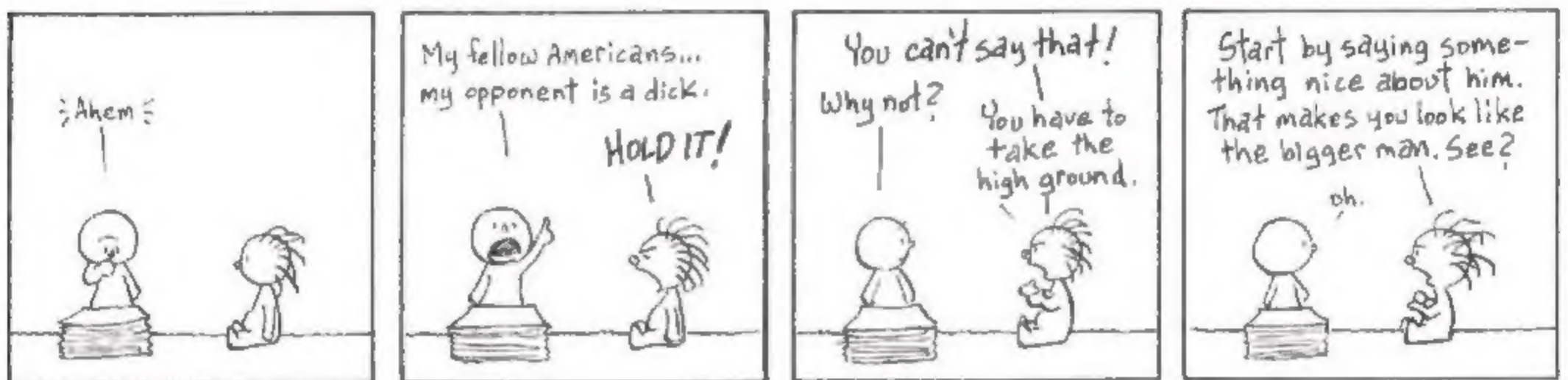


Panel 1: Well, that's a divorce fight.

Panel 2: Bik is studying his speech, Beep is content and reading.

Panel 3: Bik turns and looks, not directly at Beep, but at the space near her - which is the kind of inaccurate gaze people have when still lost in thought. You know, like drivers on cell phones.

Panel 4: Bik smiles proudly at his work and Beep responds to this. Good times.



Panel 5: Bik lifts his eyebrows to open his eyes fully and clear his throat. This is what we do to reboot our face in transition from one mode to the other. Beep, recognizing these human signals, waits patiently. Her open expression means open mind.

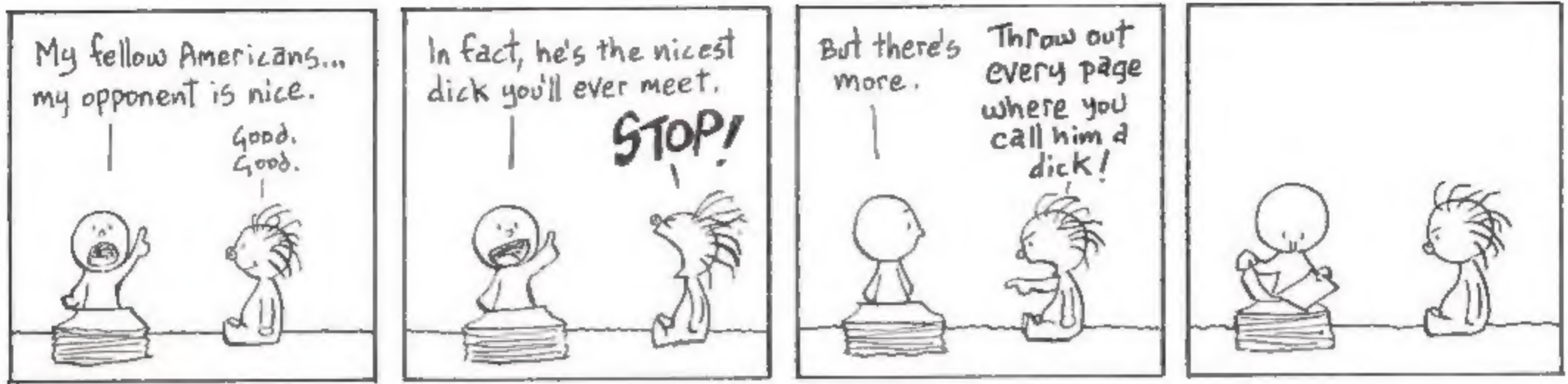
Panel 6: Bik's wide open mouth signals he is speaking loudly—as if to a large audience—his eyes fixed on the future. Beep squeezes her eyes as a sign of rejecting what she is seeing and barks out her interruption with a wide mouth. In comics, the size of the mouth opening equates to the volume of the voice. Remember Calvin walking around the house talking at the top of his lungs, his mouth wide open?

Panel 7: Bik's raised eyebrows signal he is curious, his half-smile says he is still pleasantly connected to the previous panel's feeling but acknowledging Beep is not. Beep's eyes and furrowed brow say she is now irritated. The open hands are "holding up" the problem, and solution, for Bik to see.

Panel 8: Bik's eyebrows drop and his face goes neutral as he considers Beep's words. Beep's scowl is less intent, her anger dimming as Bik appears to listen and cooperate.

Isn't this fun, analyzing a joke to the nth degree? I know we're getting dangerously close to school daze here, but stick with me. We're halfway home.





Panel 9: Bik speaks to the masses. Beep's smile and open eyes means she is pleased and accepting Bik's actions.

Panel 10: Bik's smile is naive and absent of malice. No eyebrow line prevents any misinterpretation. Beep has the same indignant reaction as Panel 5, but much wider, aka louder.

Panel 11: Bik's raised eyebrows and open eyes mean "What?" Having no mouth line implies his mouth is shut small, a signal of shutting down body actions to neutral until further notice. Beep points an accusing finger and glaring eyes at the offending speech.

Panel 12: Bik's neutral expression continues to establish him personally as non-threatening. The focus remains on the speech. Bad speech. No, no, no.



Panel 13: Bik's scowl is not anger because his eyes are open wide with focus and there is no angry mouth to reinforce an angry interpretation. Without mouth reinforcement, scowling eyes can be matched to many different expressions. In this case, it is focusing on a furious spurt of work.

Panel 14: Beep's raised eyebrows register surprise, and her lowered small mouth means it is a quiet surprise. Both her response and Bik's are gentle. Only one page out of 90,000 words? Really? Yep.

Panel 15: Bik's simple eyes and normal smile tell us he is speaking up a little, but no longer yelling his delivery... as befitting a good orator's punch line. Beep's expression, devoid of tell-tale eyebrow or mouth lines, means she is stunned. Expressionless in this case means dumbfounded.

Panel 16: Bik is pleased, his smile says so. No eyebrow line with that simple smile means no competing emotions. Beep's hapless gaze signals she is no longer responding to Bik, but lost in thought. Her innocent expression belies the murder she is considering. Because she has been the voice of reason in this exchange and Bik is oblivious to her politically correct logic—aka popular opinion—we might be amused as Beep considers a simpler alternative to teaching Bik. Judging by Bik's expression, he will never know what hit him.

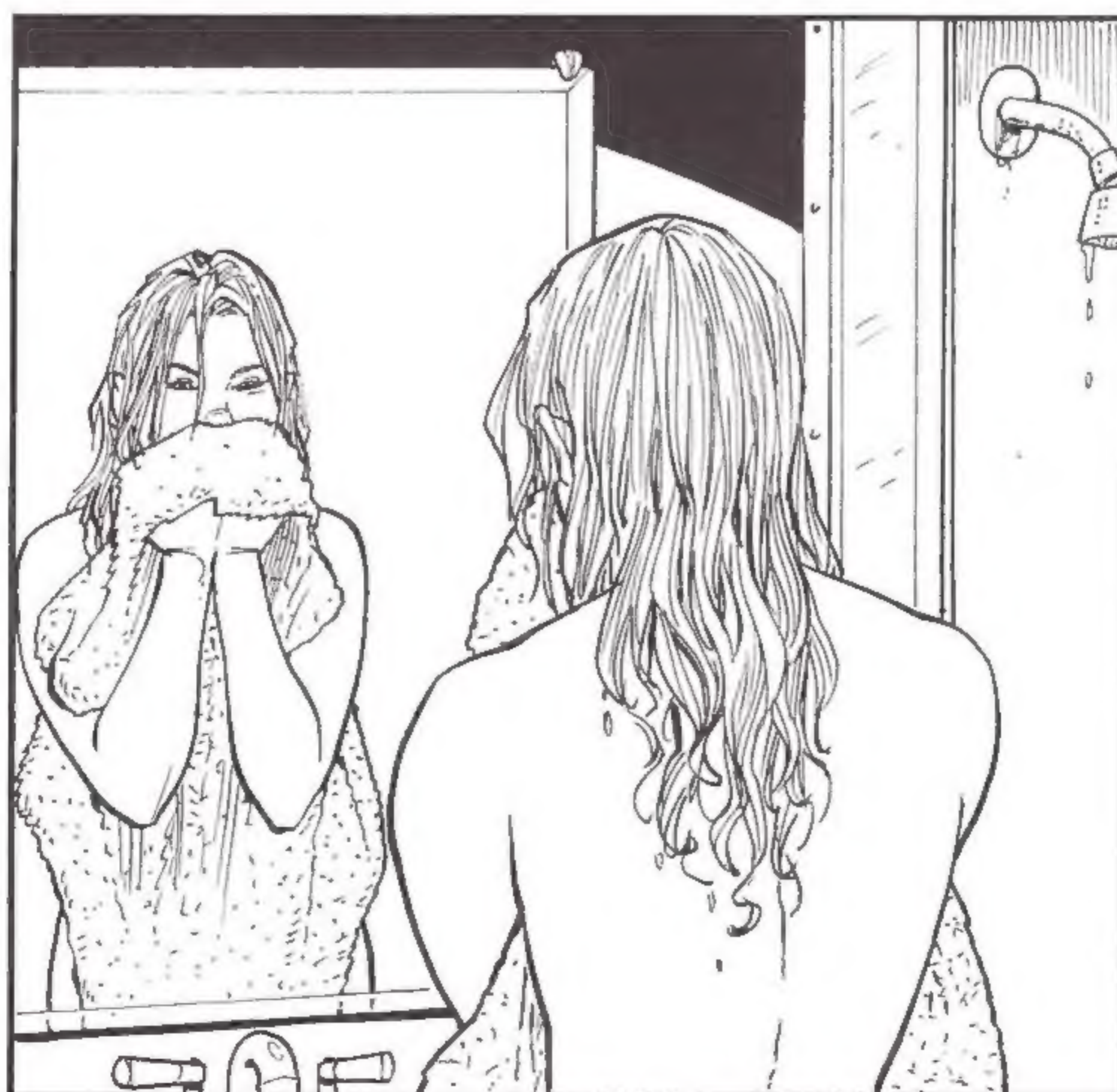


I know it's tedious to analyze a comic strip like that, especially when everything I pointed out on those two pages went through your mind subconsciously when you read the comic the first time, at full speed. It's a buzz-kill to go back and explain what we do naturally, but it's necessary for professionals to understand what is happening when they do their thing, whether its drawing a comic strip, telling a joke or swinging a golf club. You don't want your brain surgeon to dive in and do his thing on you with nothing more than raw talent and good instincts. Why would you do the same with your art? At some point you have to know exactly what you're doing, so you can do it again and again without fail and then, hopefully, find your own way of doing it better.



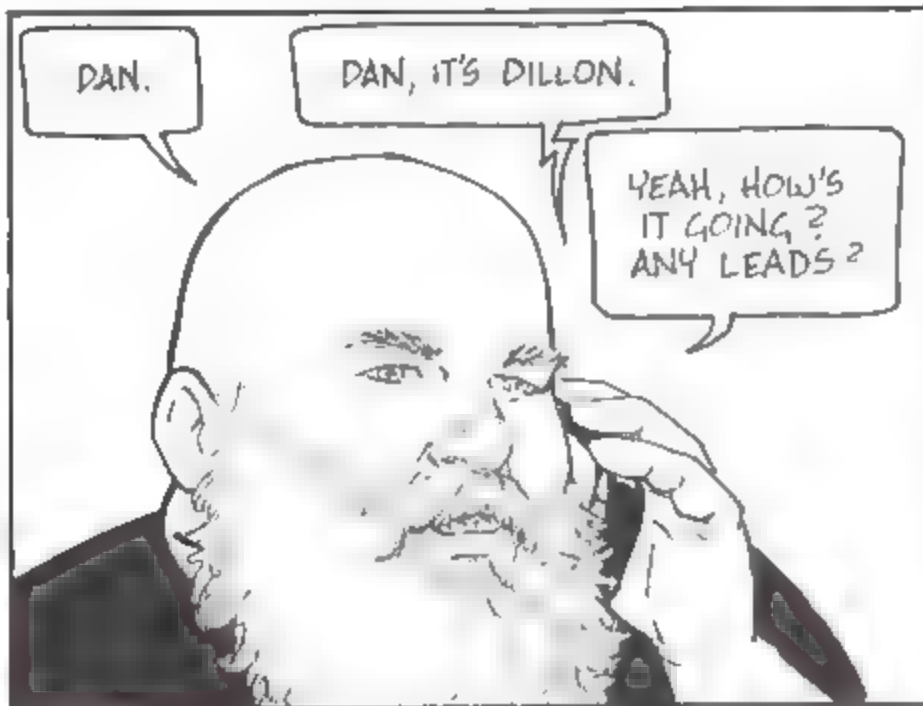
*Four looks of disdain.*

James Dean is said to have spent hours in front of a mirror, practicing his expressions, which should come as no surprise, really. You didn't think he was just relying on his talent and good looks, did you? Many artists use a mirror to capture the right expressions. Actors and artists alike know that getting the right expressions are important and the professional doesn't leave something like that up to chance. Neither should you. I'm not saying do it all from a mirror, but definitely spend some time studying how your own face moves through expressions. After all, that body in the mirror is the only one you're allowed to stare at for long periods of time in a polite society.





# the silent story





You know how when you're talking to someone and they stop halfway through a description and say "Y'know what I'm talking about." And you do. They didn't have to tell you the whole thing in detail, just enough to let you know what they're talking about and you finish the rest mentally. Yeah, you know what I'm talking about, right? Expressions do that, too... tell the rest of the story, y'know? Case in point...



Mikey is not happy. You can see it in his face. His body language hangs from his expression like a wet towel. Simple question: How was your date? Mikey's reply is minimal, but his face tells us plenty. He has that dazed look that comes from open, unfocused eyes, slightly lifted eyebrows, droopy mouth. Life is so heavy, he needs a helping hand to hold his head up.

We've all felt that way at some point. We can all imagine what kind of date produces Mikey's mood, so the drawing has opened that folder of data and memory in our brains. Now you're considering a bigger story than I drew, because you're filling in the blanks. On a scale of 1-10, I wrote a 5, but you read a 7. It's like music, really. I played a few key notes, your imagination filled the spaces between. And, the single word reply of "Horrible" didn't

accomplish this magic trick all by itself. I could have drawn Mikey shrugging and saying the same thing with a "What are you gonna do?" expression, and you might have easily dismissed the matter with a quick, "Oh, they weren't a good match." No, the implied drama came from Mikey's expression. You see that face and think, 'Hmm, what happened?'

Basically, I loaded a fiction gun and you cocked it. When the answer comes, BANG!

Anyway, we human beings do that; watch the face for clues. In fiction, the writer gives these clues one way, the artist another. The two combined can create a reading experience more powerful than either alone. That's why I like cartooning, which can be defined as writing and drawing at the same time. You can say so much with so little.

Nel Gaiman once said, "It's the mystery that endures, not the answer." So it is with the silent stories in comic art. I'll pursue Mikey's mystery but I won't tell you everything. And your imagination will provide the rest of the story.





Poor Mike His face reflects the frustration all men have felt at some point in their adult lives, struggling with relationships. You could write an entire book off that last panel alone.

Oh wait, I did. It's called Strangers In Paradise

Talk about silent stories. The characters of SIP had more ghosts in their closets than Ebenezer Scrooge. Once you set your comic up that way, every expression you make means more than the moment, and it's a blast to draw.



Get it? The dialogue is saying one thing, but the girls are really talking about something else entirely To spell it out: Francine's fixation on Freddie and her determination to ignore the fact that Katchoo wants to be her partner Read it again, with the sub-plot in mind, and notice that the emotions and expressions are not for the dialogue, they're matched to the silent story.

Fun, huh? That's why I think graphic storytelling is more powerful than prose a one. The ability to utilize expressions in the reading changes everything. You can use the full power of the written word plus the power of visual storytelling. Only comics can do that.

So... Global Communication, Facial Expressions, Silent Story. Let's break for volleyball.











# accuracy





You're an artist, or an aspiring artist, and you've sketched a lot of faces. You've gone through How To Draw books, seen the cartoon heads, the semi-realistic renditions of a few expressions, the gruesome drawings of heads without skin, without muscles or tendons. But when you sit down to draw the next face, does it really help? You look at the face you just drew and you wonder why it seems stiff and asymmetrical. Really? Again? My millionth stiff, asymmetrical face in a row? I'm a human being, for goodness sakes. . I've been looking at faces all my life. I should be able to draw one without it looking like a melting doll head... I mean action figure.

Don't be discouraged.

Look at the bundle of joy on the facing page. Let's call him John, because that's his name. This is a pane of John having a moment ( n Echo). We also see John's skeleton, John's skeleton with muscles and tendons and organs, and cartoon John. They're all the same pose of the same man and not one of them is technically correct.

In the big panel, I've cheated the truth on little details all over John's face, right down to his flying eyebrows. In my desire to intensify the moment, all these details have been stretched a bit to exaggerate the truth and make things more intense. Stage actors do the same thing with stage makeup. I just used a bit more pencil here and there, opened things up a bit. It's like reality, but turned up a notch.

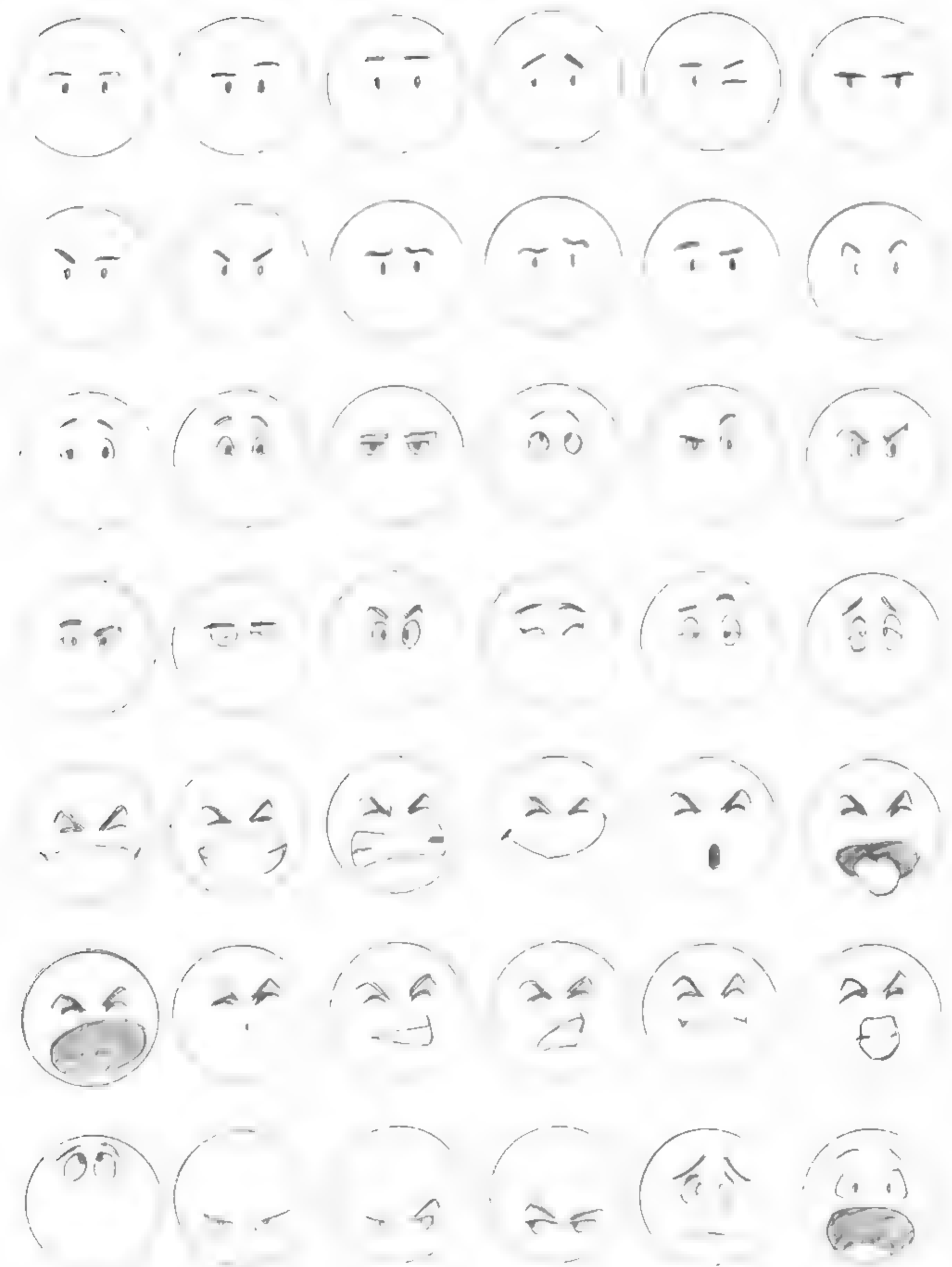
It's the same with the sketches of John's skull and muscle heads. I drew them from memory. You wouldn't want your doctor using these drawings, but they're close enough to throw cartoon skin over and get a decent looking figure. I know it's odd for me to say "Don't try to be an A-student at this" but, for anybody other than a medical illustrator, a working knowledge of what is underneath the skin and a good idea of the lovely bones all that stuff is pinned to is all you need. You don't have to know the names of all 640 muscles and 206 bones, but you do want to know about the major parts—in this case, the face. You want to know what is pulling the mouth around, flaring the nostrils, furrowing the brow and wiggling the ears because knowing what is under the surface helps you draw the surface.

Remember the wind in the trees we talked about for women and clothing? Now we're going one level deeper. What makes the skin puff out here and pull in there? What makes the beautiful bulges and gross saggy parts? It's your job to know. As you learn, you might pick up some fun things you never would have known before. Like, why do men have bigger brains than apes? The jaw muscle—that vertical one in front of the ear: it's huge in an ape, allowing him to clamp his massive jawbone with tremendous pressure. It also makes the cranial cavity between the two opposing jaw muscles small, inhibiting the size of the brain. Man has a specific variation in DNA that directly results in a smaller jaw muscle. This has allowed the brain to grow bigger over time, and the jawbone to shrink. Fast forward to the top heavy skull of man today. What a thing to learn in an art book, huh? But you can't draw people without learning something about them. Maybe that's why we keep drawing,—the joy of learning. And now I bet you never forget that jaw muscle.

Bottom line, you don't have to be a hardware engineer to operate your computer, neither do you have to be an anatomical expert to draw the human body. Learn the major stuff, soak up the rest as needed, and have fun with it. This approach will take you a long way.



# K.I.S.S.





Have you ever tried the K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple... uh, Sunshine?) exercise on the left? Fill a page with circles and quickly put a different expression on each one until the page is full. (Remember when I told you to put your circle template away when drawing the breasts of women? You can retrieve it from the drawer now.) So... no repeats on the expressions. And no copying off my paper.

The first 18-24 come easily, then you have to dig a little deeper, right? The point of this exercise is to make you think about the variety and mechanics of facial expression without being distracted by the act of drawing itself. Because whether or not you can draw a face you're happy with is an entirely different problem that has nothing to do with drawing an expression. You can draw a smiley face, right? Then you can draw an expression. Whether you draw it on an emoticon or a realistic oil painting is a different conversation. What I'm trying to do here is separate the problems.

Say, for example, you have three major problems when drawing Batman's head: Your Batman head looks a little wrong. You can't draw expressions; and you don't have anything to draw with. Dealing with all three problems at the same time can be confusing and slow you down in your progress to a solution. Fix the problems individually, then put your solutions together for the complete picture. In this case, you would:

1. Buy a pencil, for crying out loud. They're only about \$300 at a Mont Blanc store. Or get one of the 25 cent wooden ones that actually work better. Whichever.

2. Draw the K.I.S.S. exercise. Voila! You just drew a page full of expressions, so don't say you can't. Now you have a better idea of what you want the eyes and mouth to do, getting that on any face you draw in the future is going to be easier than before.

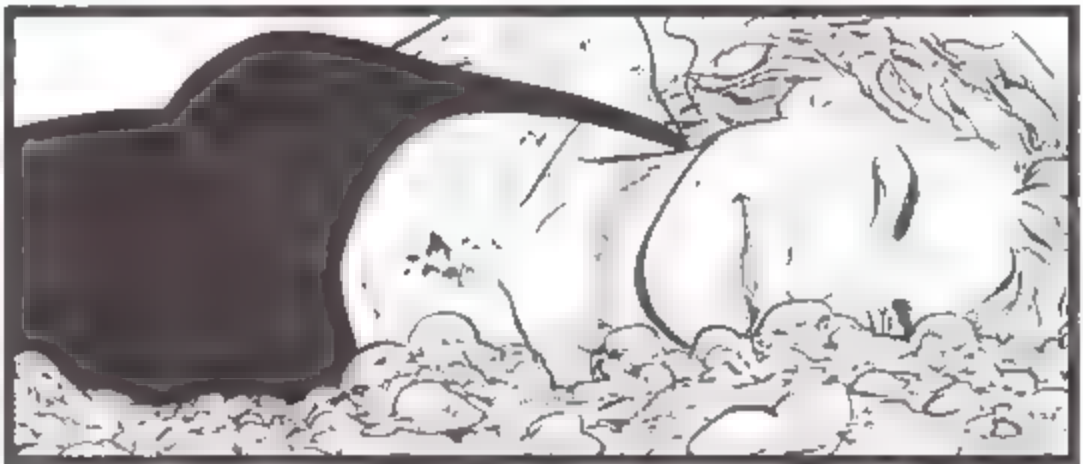
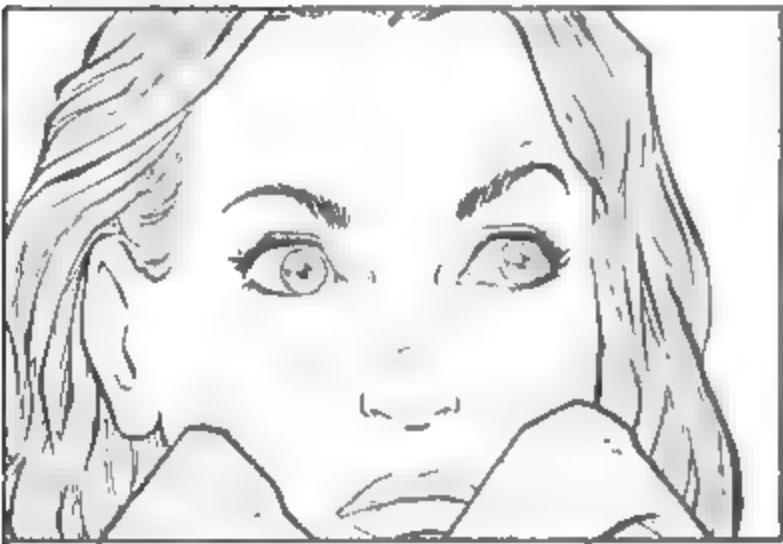
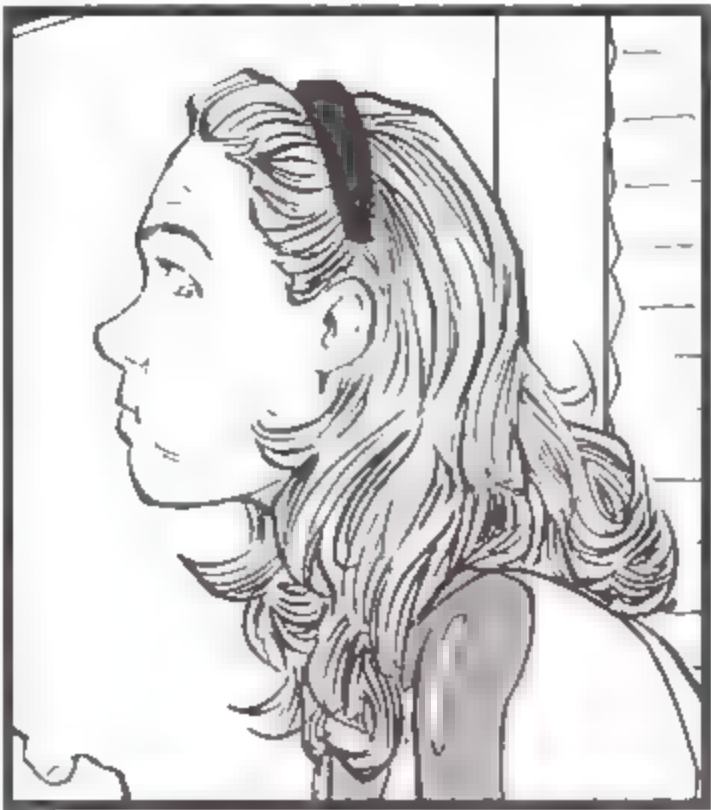
3. a) Find your favorite picture of Batman that somebody awesome — like Jim Lee — drew. (I can't show you Batman because I'm not DC Comics) Using your new pencil, draw Batman's head freehand (meaning you draw it without tracing or any other tricky aids) as best you can, copying Jim's drawing as close as possible. When you're finished hold them side by side. Look alike? Maybe not. Okay, you did that so you could do this:

b) Lay a sheet of tracing paper over Jim's drawing and trace it, just the head — keep it simple. Now hold those two side by side. Look better? You did not just waste your time — you just had your mind and hand follow the right path for the first time. Don't underestimate this exercise because art is a systemic act and brain to hand communication is important. Your hand just showed your brain how to draw Batman correctly. Now if only your brain could see this path every time, right? Next step:

c) Lay the traced drawing(b) over your freehand version(a). See where the lines vary? See where you maybe have too small a this or too large a that? Using this as a roadmap, try a new freehand drawing, this time looking at this overlay combination, focusing on following the correct path, deliberately not following your usual path. This will require your full attention because it will feel odd. That's because you are disobeying your brain to hand habits, teaching them a new path. With repetition, the act of drawing the correct path will register in your brain. Repeat the exercise until you like the results, then play with changing his eyes and mouth like the emoticons K.I.S.S. Now you're drawing Batman.



Okay, tme for me to practice what I preach Let's pull art from my comic pages and compare the fac al expressions to the K.I.S.S. version. This will take the cnalenge of real stic drawing out of the equation. Anybody can draw these expressions using K.I.S.S.



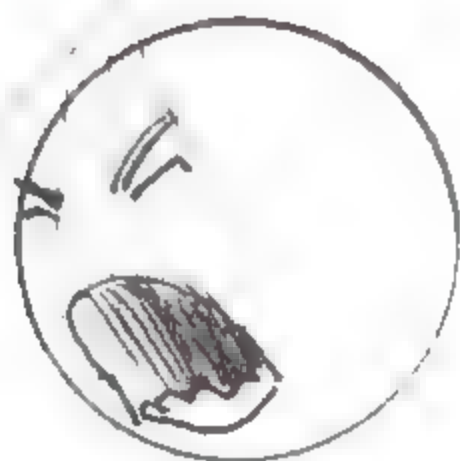
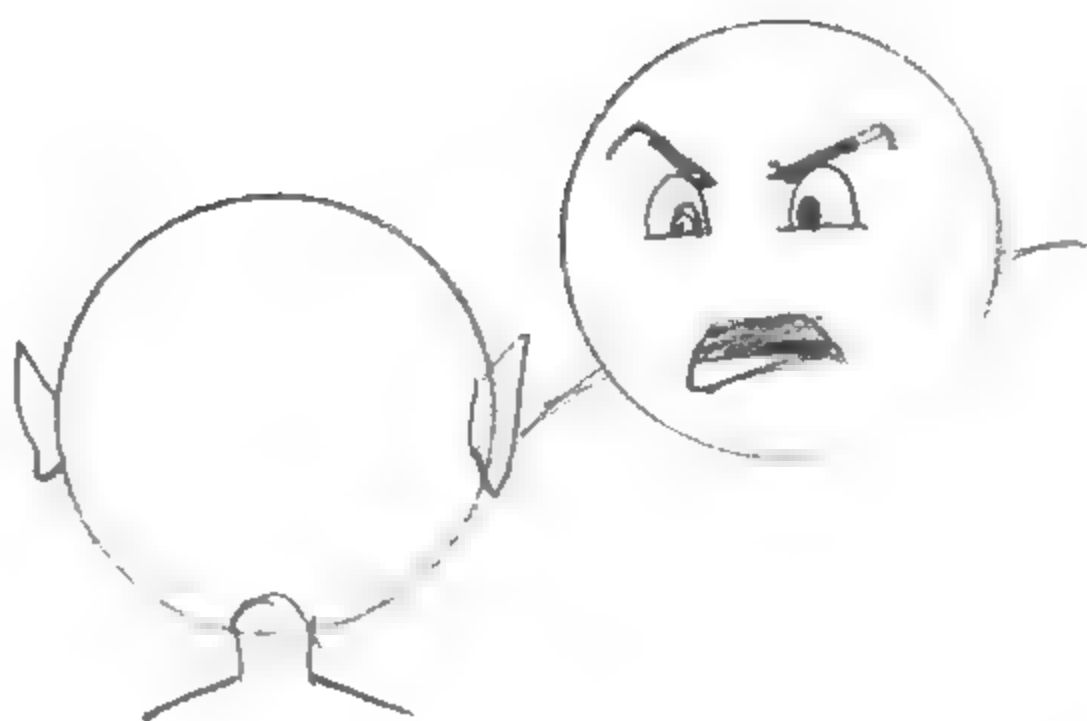
Lying down, sideways, half in the dirt...it doesn't matter, it's still just an emoti-con with extra drawing around it. See?



They're all like this.







Don't let all the hair fool you. This is all that is under the beard, the red nose and old age wrinkles—a simple emoticon.



I hope this helps you see the simple lines in every face you see from now on. Whether it's my work, yours or your favorite comic artist, it all comes down to a few basic lines. The rest is what you bring to it, and that's your signature look.



I'd like to share one more thing before I use the last couple of pages to flood you with expressions to use for reference (and tracing exercises?). It's about Style vs Limitation.

**Limitation:** One of the most common problems with artists of all levels is that we develop one way to draw our hero, male or female, and we can't draw a variation of that. For example, all our men, or women, look alike and the only way to tell them apart is by their hair and costumes. I'm not talking about style here, I'm talking about a limit to the artist's ability.

**Style:** Every top artist has a style, aka signature look, of their own. Within that style, they can also produce a wide range of variations. One of the best examples I can think of is Jeff Scott Campbell, a terrific artist with his own distinctive style and a wide range of variation and flexibility within the style. You can tell a Campbell drawing when you see it, but he can fill a poster full of heroes and they're all built differently and look different—they are variations within a master style.

Limitation is when you can't draw anything else. Style is when you can draw anything and give it your own look. Big difference.

So why am I bringing this up in a book/chapter about expressions? Because I spent a few years trying to design just the right girl's face that was all my own, one that I would love and happily draw for the rest of my life. Then, when I finally drew it for the first time, anything I did different with the face lost "the look".

Take Katchoo, for example. She's one of my basic girl looks. When I first got the look I liked it was in one drawing with one certain look of attitude. I leaned back and admired that drawing with mixed feelings. On one hand, I had reached a goal; on the other hand, I knew I now had to repeat the goal and master it from every angle. As I drew, I tried to keep that certain attitude to her look, but found it impossible. I had made the first drawing in my own style but immediately found my limitations.

I think this happens to most artists who are trying to do more than copy others. So, what do you do? After 2-3 years, I had only a handful of drawings of Katchoo that I liked, and tons I didn't. I went through all the How To Draw books in the library and not one of them addressed this problem. They showed me how to draw like them, not how to be original.

For awhile back then, I was frustrated, thinking I just didn't have the extra measure of talent required to get what I was after. Then one day I was flipping through a family photo album and I saw, really saw, something I'd never noticed before. Our faces change so much during the years and emotions of life, at any given second we don't look like ourselves. The defining look we think of is usually the face at rest. Well, that changes completely when the person screams, or feels sick or lets out a belly laugh. Look at pictures of yourself and your loved ones. See how your faces changed over the years but they were always recognizable. You would recognize your loved ones whether they were smiling or grief-stricken, yet their faces look very different in the two moments. The rules for art are no different. Stretch Katchoo's sexy scowl into a bright smile and she will look very different, but she is still Katchoo and you know her when you see her. Once I recognized this in life, that limitation was gone from my art.

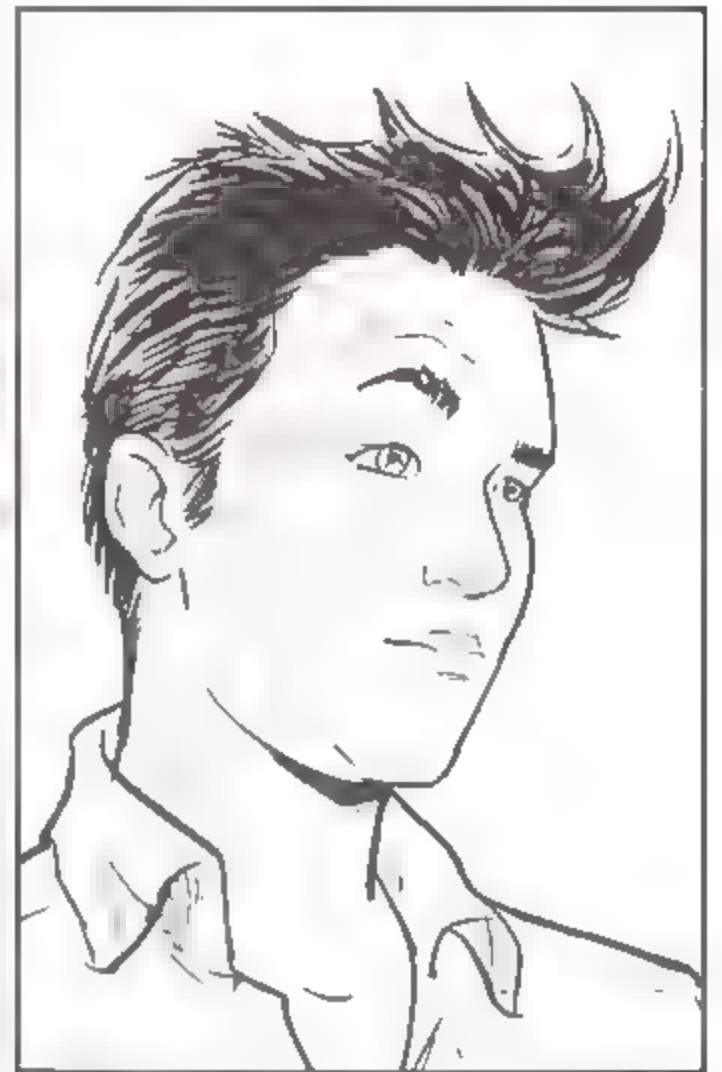


# variations on a face

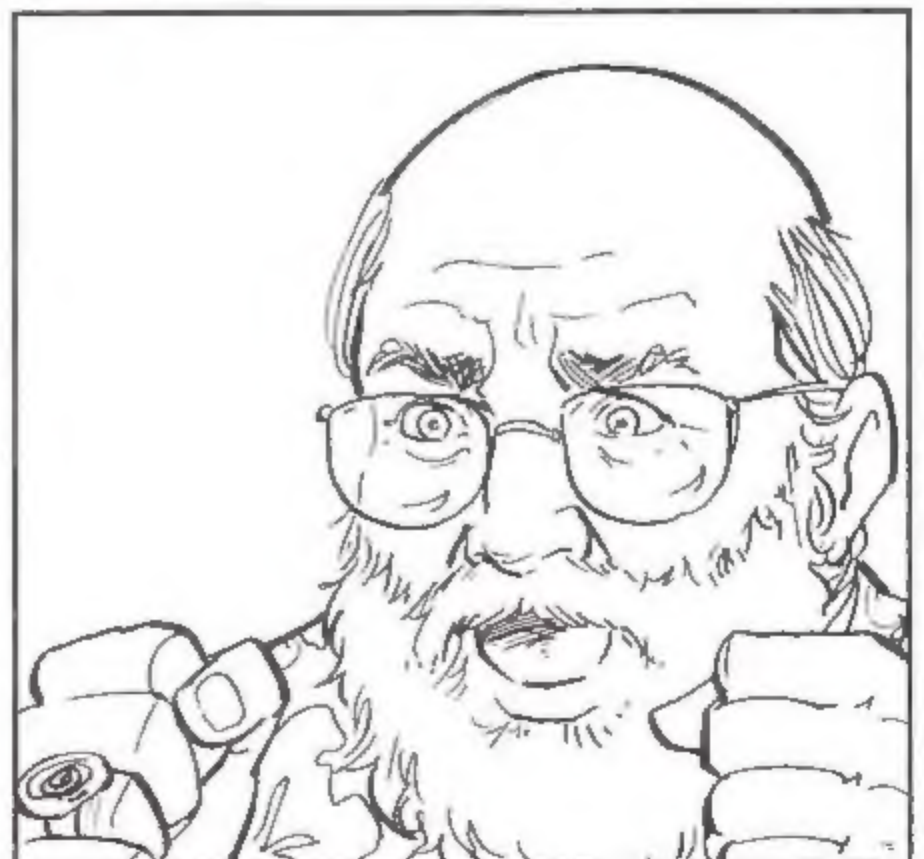
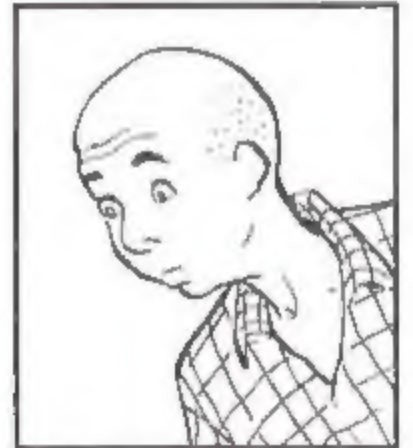
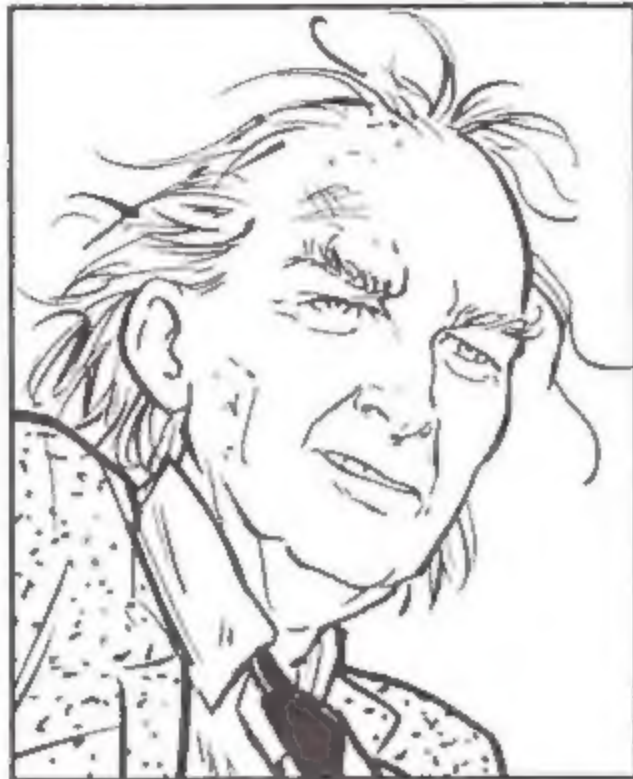




# the faces of echo











One day a Roman statesman named Cicero stood up and said something to the effect of "The eyes are the window to the soul." This statement rang so true that it has survived two millennia. What Cicero meant was, we can see who a person really is by the expressions on their face. The same can be said for art.

Great art—whether it is in a museum or a comic book—reveals the soul of its subject and touches the heart. Pretty is nice, but soulful is unforgettable. We tend to care more for people and things we know best, so the more a viewer gets from your art, the more they will care about it. There are numerous aspects to great art, but none more important than expressions.

I hope I've helped demystify some of the challenges of expressive art because the world needs more of it and I'd love to see what you draw next. So, go draw something!



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